

Thomas Jefferson to J. Philip Reibelt, December 21, 1805, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO J. P. REIBELT J. MSS.

Washington, Dec. 21, 05.

Sir, —During the sitting of the legislature, & especially at it's commencement it is rare that I can find a moment for my private correspondence. Hence my tardiness in acknowledging the receipt of your favors of the 3d 16th & 19th.

I had often thought on the subject you propose as to the mode of procuring German emigrants to take the place of our blacks. To this, however, the state legislatures are alone competent, the general government possessing no powers but those enumerated in the Constitution, and that of obtaining emigrants at the general expense not being one of the enumerated powers. With respect to the state governments, I not only doubt, but despair, of their taking up this operation, till some strong pressure of circumstance shall force it on them. The same may be said as to the Merino sheep. Congress could not, by our Constitution give one dollar for all in Spain, because that kind of power has not been given them. It is probable that private exertions will transplant & spread them. I have possessed the breed several years, and have been constantly distributing them in my neighborhood. Colo. Humphreys brought over 50 from which stock he is furnishing great numbers. * * *